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# AI-Driven Decision-Making in OBOR-Initiated Business Expansion

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### ABSTRACT

The present field of strategic decision-making that encompasses the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the topography of global business development especially the One Belt One Road (OBOR) route in China. This paper examines how the AI-based decision-making system can help the enterprise develop the new markets within the context of OBOR by increasing the intelligence in the market, evaluation of risks, and performance improvement. Using an extensive literature overview and conceptual model evaluation, the discussion in this paper intelligibly illuminates the role of AI technology, including machine learning, predictive analytics, and big data processing, in making important business decisions, whether the process of entering they exist in the market or optimizing the supply chain. The results indicate that AI can help companies to overcome the challenge of operating in the intricate markets of the OBOR by facilitating the adoption of data-driven decision-making procedures. Nevertheless, the issues of data access and ethical concerns and management resistance are still the main obstacles to the application of AI in these settings. The research has been significant to the theoretical context of the AI role in global business management and the real-life experience of companies that are eager to take advantage of the opportunities created by OBOR.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Study Background

The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in international business planning has reshaped businesses in terms of how business enterprises evaluate their opportunities and risk estimations in large-scale cross border business activities like the China One belt One Road (OBOR) project. OBOR or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a project aimed at achieving economic cooperation in the region of Asia, Europe, and Africa by developing the infrastructure, facilitating trade, and promoting investments [11]. But the difficulties that the businesses getting involved in OBOR expansions confront have their complex nature, including political instability, a variety of regulations as well as cultures, and market fluctuations. Such uncertainties require advanced decision-making processes

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that are above the conventional managerial decision. Artificial intelligence has created decision-making systems which have become critical in the quest to resolve these challenges. AI allows companies to break large data sets and provide actionable information to enter the market, calculate risks, and plan operations with the help of machine learning algorithms, big data analytics, and predictive modelling [14]. To businesses subjected to or interested in the OBOR initiative, AI technologies contribute to the increased capacity to predict demand and optimize the supply chain, identify geopolitical risks, sense the local consumer trends thus delivering better decisions and minimizing uncertainty [4]. Although its promising future of OBOR business expansion, role of strategic use of AI in business is poorly researched in the literature and specifically its effect over the managerial decision-making processes regarding its efficacy.

### *1.2 Problem Statement*

Although the OBOR initiative has a tempting avenue of expansion, the expansion is also associated with a significant degree of complexity in decision-making that standard business intelligence tools might fail to handle fully. The current trends in the use of AI-powered decision-support systems hold a potential solution to such complexity in the form of data-based insights and real-time strategic forecasting [2]. Empirical studies, however, on the specific impacts of AI technologies on the processes of decision making (within the framework of OBOR) are scarce. The current literature mainly discusses the technological or geopolitical aspect of OBOR without further knowledge of how corporations use AI with the aim of reducing uncertainty and enhancing the outcome of cross-border expansion [11]. What is more, the issues of data quality, the transparency of algorithms, and managerial trust in AI products have not been solved yet [10]. These gaps indicate the necessity of a thorough study of the links between the employment of AI and the effectiveness of managerial decisions in the process of strategy of OBOR expansion.

### *1.3 Objectives of Research*

The main goal of this research will be to discuss how AI-powered decision-making systems affect strategic growth of business, which is involved in the OBOR initiative. In particular, the study shall focus on:

- i. Diagnose how AI implementation is increasing the quality of decision making during the expansion of business in OBOR.
- ii. Explore the process of risk assessment capabilities, as an intermediary in the AI-decision making connection.
- iii. Determine the moderating roles of managerial trust in AI systems on decision results.

### *1.4 Research Questions*

In an attempt to accomplish these goals, the research questions below are suggested:

- i. What are the effects of AI-based outcome choice of the quality of strategic decision making in the business incursions of OBOR?
- ii. Do AI-controlled risk assessment influence the connection between AI use and the effectiveness of decision-making?

- iii. To which degree does AI system trust mediated between AI system usage and the performance of decisions?

### *1.5 Hypotheses*

The above questions form the basis on which this study has hypothesized as follows:

- i. H1: According to the quality of managerial decision-making in OBOR business expansions, the effects of AI adoption are positive.
- ii. H2: The mediation effect lies in the capacity of AI-driven risk assessment to determine the interaction between AI adoption and the quality of decisions.
- iii. H3: AI adoption is associated with decision quality and managerial trust in AI systems acts as a moderating factor here since higher trust enhances the relationship.

### *1.6 Importance of the Study*

These contributions of this study are both theoretical and practical to the disciplines of AI adoption in global business strategy as well as expansion of enterprises related to OBOR. On a theoretical level, it fills the gap between the AI-powered model of decision-making and the practical difficulties encountered by the businesses focused on the OBOR. It expands the existing theories like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and incorporates the elements of cross-border business intricacy as well as AI trust [3]. In practice, the work provides managers with practical suggestions in response to a question of whether AI-based tools should be used in market analysis, risk mitigation, and optimization of the operations in OBOR territories. Moreover, it prepares policymakers and AI solutions designers on the organizational requirements along with the trust obstacles that can work against the complete strategy implementation of AI in the worldwide business enterprises.

## **2. Review of the Literature**

The fact that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been increasingly integrated into the strategies of doing business internationally has been proven to be an important line of investigation, especially in the context of the OBOR initiative of China. As companies enter the markets of the OBOR relying on the Hong Kong Connect program, its markets with an unstable regulatory framework, infrastructural imbalance, and geopolitical dynamics, the list of advanced and data-driven decision structures has become enormous [11]. Regardless of the widespread use of AI solutions in the optimization of supply chains, predictions in the market, and customer knowledge, there is little academic research on how AI can help in making decisions throughout the process of the OBOR-guided expansion of business.

### *2.1 Underlying Theories*

This research study has theoretical premises that rely on various existing models about the topic of AI adoption, in the decision-making role of a manager. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) stands on the basis of knowing the intentions of the manager to accept AI-driven systems with the focus on perceived usefulness and ease of use [3]. In the context of OBOR, such perceptions are especially sharp since managers determine the ability of AI to significantly decrease the level of uncertainty and inform their strategic options in unstructured overseas markets [10].

Moreover, Decision Theory is another result that can be visualized in the way how the AI can increase the rational decision-making process, which can be expanded with processing giant data sets, risk modeling, and the provision of probable outcomes that will be important in the context of unknown territories of the OBOR [5].

In addition, the theory of bounded rationality is adduced to understand that AI will eliminate most part of the cognitive restrictions by increasing the span of available information available to decision-makers so that they can overcome the hermetic system of judgment that is prevalent in multifaceted international expansion choices [13]. Lastly, resource-based view (RBV) attributes of AI capabilities describe AI capabilities as precious, rare, and inimitable resources that can provide competitive advantage in OBOR engagements when firms use AI to provide better market analysis and risk assessment [1].

## *2.2 Identification of Variables*

In this research effort, AI-Driven Decision-Making Capability is conceptualized as an independent variable that quantifies the level of adoption of AI tools in the strategic decision-making of firms pertaining to their plans to grow through the OBOR. The mentioned AI tools include predictive analytics, machine learning algorithms, and big data platforms.

Dependent variable is in Managerial Decision-Making Effectiveness such as the quality of the decision, timeliness of the decision, mitigation of risk, and the strategic orientation of the decision to enter or operate within the OBOR market. Two more constructs are found: AI-enabled Risk Assessment Capability is named a mediating variable and Managerial Trust in AI Systems is a moderating variable. The mediating role implies how the AI tools will enhance the decision outcome due to the increasing ability to detect and assess the risk of volatile territories of the OBOR [14]. In the meantime, the level of trust in management is used to identify how sufficient decision-makers trust the insights provided by AI, and the low level of trust can decrease the overall effectiveness of the guidance provided by AI even though it is technically correct [8]. Therefore, the conceptual framework assumes that through risk assessment, which acts as a mediator, adoption of AI and trust in AI impinge on effectiveness of decision-making.

## *2.3 Empirical Review*

The evidence is confirming that AI has a transformational implication to strategic decision-making. As an example, Chai *et al.*, point to the aspect of AI in the supplier selection processes and focus on the enhancing sense of the algorithmic judgment being superior to human discretion when it comes to intricate environments [2]. In the same breath, Dwivedi *et al.*, emphasize the capacity of AI to process unstructured data in the market into practical intelligence, an aspect that will be useful when operating in the markets of the OBOR, where there exists informational asymmetries [4]. Nevertheless, still, obstacles exist. Regardless of the analytics presented by the AI, the human element is still at the center of it all, the concept of trust and acceptance [10]. Employees who sign off on or oversee the AI recommendations (managers) can be skeptical especially in cases where they feel opaque results and results that are not strategic intuitions [8].

In addition, subjects of particular obstacles in the OBOR markets, including the insufficient data, inconsistency in regulation, and instability, may reduce the accuracy or functionality of AI as a predictive tool [11].

## **2.4 Gaps in Research**

Though previous literature is voluminous on use of AI in supply chains, customer and business intelligence in general, there is a visible gap in knowledge of how use of AI helps in quality decision-making in international expansion context of OBOR specifically. The majority of literature overlooks the interaction of AI potentials with the OBOR environment because they do not pay attention to geopolitical risk, institutional disparity, and cultural distance reducing the utility of AI. Also, the mediating role of risk assessment and moderating effect of trust in AI in the decision making related to the OBOR is not presented and is not empirically validated in the literature. The study is therefore important to fill these gaps by investigating the direct, mediating, and moderating effects of these constructs in a special context of OBOR expansion.

## **2.5 Summary of the Literature Review**

In conclusion, it is proposed based on the literature that AI is a very promising development in managerial decision-making when applied to the OBOR expansion but that it is both limited by contextual restrictions and by human restrictions. TAM, Decision Theory, Bounded Rationality, and RBV models form part of this theoretical model of the proposed study where they propose that the adoption of AI will improve the effectiveness of decisions through better risk analysis, depending on how much the managers trust such systems. The research, in that way, contributes to theory and practice, as it covers the gap in empirical research between the AI adoption and the business strategy led by the OBOR.

## **3. Research Methodology**

In this chapter, the approach of methodology that was used in the study of the effects of AI-based decision-making on the effectiveness of managerial decision-making within the scope of OBOR-led business expansion is presented. It contains research design, population and sampling procedure, data collection process, research instrumentation, data analysis process and hypotheses testing methods, ethical issues and limitations.

### **3.1 Design of Research**

The nature of the research will take the form of a quantitative research design using a positivist paradigm in which emphasis is placed on evaluating the nature of relationship between identified variables by use of statistics. The selection of this design is consistent with the previous research that dealt with the investigation of the issue of technology adoption and the results of decisions made about it in organizational contexts [2,4]. The survey of decision-makers involved in business activities related to OBOR was based on the cross-sectional research approach that allowed gathering the perceptions of how AI needs to be adopted, the extent to which risks can be identified, the level of trust to AI systems, and the overall effectiveness of decision-making.

### **3.2 Sampling and Population**

The potential population of this research includes the senior managers, operational directors, and strategic planners working in the multinational businesses (MNEs) and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) of the OBOR markets, at least in Southeast Asia and Central Asia. All these respondents are

assumed to directly influence the decision-making process of the strategic aspects of market entry, risk mitigation and expansion of operations into the regions of OBOR.

### *3.3 Sampling Method*

Purposive sampling method was used, because a specific group of interviewees, with both knowledge and experience regarding the topic of AI adoption as well as with knowledge and experience regarding the topic of business activity related to OBOR, was desired. By doing so, this non-probability means of sampling provided that only the applicable respondent who can make informed decisions about AI-based decision-making approaches in OBOR settings would be included [6].

### *3.4 Sample Size*

Based on the suggestions of Hair *et al.*, [9] regarding structural equation modeling (SEM) a minimum sample size of 200 was considered to have statistical strength and dependable models. The target population can be adequately represented by this sample size since it is found to be adequate in medium effect sizes commonly used in complex multivariate designs.

### *3.5 Methods of Data Collection*

A structured online questionnaire was created to reach primary data, in which the questionnaires were distributed via professional-focused networks including LinkedIn and industry-oriented forums, and company-to-company mailing lists. The survey was able to collect solutions on a five-level Likert scale with the lower end at strongly disagree and the upper end at strongly agree, making it possible to measure the concepts like the level of AI adoption, a perceived risk assessment ability, reliance on AI systems, and effectiveness of decision-making.

### *3.6 Instrumentation of the Research Design*

The questions required of the questionnaire were compiled based on validated scales of earlier studies. The items used to measure AI adoption were built on the basis of the TAM constructs [3], whereas the items used to measure risk assessment capability were built on the basis of Zhang and Zhang [14]. The scale created by Glikson and Woolley [8] was utilised to measure managerial trust in AI systems. At the operational level, decision-making effectiveness was measured as suggested by Chai *et al.*, including such aspects as the accuracy of decisions, their timeliness, and strategic fit [2]. This tool has been reviewed by experts and pilot tested and thus the instrument reliability and content validity have been ensured.

### *3.7 Data Analysis Methods*

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze data through AMOS software. SEM can help in testing a complex association that incorporates mediating variables and moderating variables [9]. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used in analysis in confirming the measurement model whereas structural modelling was used to test the hypothesized relationship. Cronbach alpha was used to measure reliability whereas validity was measured by both Average Variance Extracted

(AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR). Bootstrapping effects were employed to test mediation and moderation effects to make them robust.

### *3.8 Hypotheses Testing*

The testing of hypotheses of the study obtained in Chapter 1 occurred using SEM paths:

- i. H1: AI adoption → Decision-making effectiveness
- ii. H2: AI adoption → Risk assessment capability → Decision-making effectiveness (mediation)
- iii. H3: Managerial trust moderates the relationship between AI adoption and decision-making effectiveness.

The value of  $p < 0.05$  was accepted as a significant basis of statistics and the model fit indices including CFI and RMSEA along with TLI were determined to determine the model adequacy.

### *3.9 Ethics*

The study was conducted according to the ethical standards in terms of human subjects, namely, informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to participate in the study voluntarily. The purposes of the study, withdrawal rights of respondents and anonymity of data were indicated to the respondents. It passed through the research ethics committee of the author and was processed according to the general rules of research [12].

### *3.10 Limitations of Methodology*

Nonetheless, it is possible to have the limitations in this study despite its rigor. First, being cross-section/cross-sectional, the design does not allow the causal inference because the temporal dynamics of AI adoption and decision-making evolution are not recorded. Second, the self-reported measurement may contain a possibility of common method bias, even though statistical adjustments were provided (e.g., Harman single-factor test). Third, purposive sampling method can have limiting effect on the findings to generalise to other firms outside OBOR. These limitations are proposed to be overcome through future research with use of longitudinal designs or mixed-methods approach.

## **4. Results, Analysis of Data, and Findings**

### *4.1 Introduction*

The chapter contains the discussion of the data obtained among the respondents taking part in the business activities linked to the development of OBOR, and the purpose was to answer the question how AI-based decision-making would influence the work of managers. In the analysis, there is the measurement model assessment, structural relationship evaluation of the constructs, and the testing of the majority of the hypotheses. The findings will give empirical data in support of the theoretical framework espoused in other chapters.

### *4.2 Response Rate and Respondent Profile*

The invitations to the survey were sent out to 250 senior managers and strategic decision-makers in companies that operate in the regions of the OBOR, with 217 of them giving valid responses, which

gave an effective response percentage of 86.8. The population also corresponded to the main sectors of the OBOR projects with the respondents belonging to logistics, manufacturing, information technology, and energy industries [11]. The majority of respondents played the roles of a general manager, operations director, regional strategist, which guarantees the validity of their views on the application of AI in decision-making.

#### *4.3 Evaluation of Measurement Model*

In an attempt to measure the reliability and validity of the constructs, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed. The findings revealed that in all constructs the internal consistency was acceptable as the mean values of Cronbach alpha were found to be above 0.70, which implies acceptable reliability [9]. Convergent validity was supported because values of factors loading were higher than 0.60 and that of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded the value of at least 0.50. The discriminant validity was also tested because the square roots of AVE for every construct was greater when compared to the inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

#### *4.4 Hypothesis Testing and Structural Model*

To test the posited linkages between constructs, the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used. The data were well suited to the model (chi-square/degree of freedom = 1.89, comparative fit index = 0.94, root mean square error of approximation = 0.047), and are within the provisions of the criteria on acceptable fit [9].

##### *4.4.1 The degree of adoption of AI and the performance of the decision-making (H1)*

Positive and high correlations (Hypothesis 1) were discovered between the adoption of AI and managerial decision-making effectiveness (0.41,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding implies that further integration of the AI will make the strategic decision in the further development of OBOR, as has already been shown that AI improves the work of the enterprise and the quality of decisions [4].

##### *4.4.2 Risk assessment capability as mediator in the relationship between ecosystem services and meaning making (H2)*

In the mediation analysis, the ability to assess risks using AI was shown to mediate the association between the use of AI and effectiveness of decision-making significantly (27,  $p < 0.01$ ). The confidence intervals based on bootstrapping excluded the value zero, and this proves a partial mediation effect. This confirms Hypothesis 2 and indicates the significance of the risks analysis instruments based on artificial intelligence in improving the effectiveness of the strategic decision-making process in a complicated market environment like the one in the OBOR region [14].

##### *4.4.3 Moderator variable of managerial trust (H3)*

The moderation of managerial trust in AI systems (Hypothesis 3, 0.19,  $p < 0.05$ ) was approved by the analysis as well. The interaction effect showed that the effect of AI adoption on decision effectiveness was greater in managers with a greater level of AI-tool trust. The current observation correlates to the conclusions made by Glikson and Woolley [8], who further stressed that managerial trust represents one of the most critical factors in terms of facilitating AI use in professional settings.



#### **4.5 Summary of Findings**

The findings, in general, prove that the implementation of AI leads to the increased effectiveness of managerial decision making in the OBOR market expansions due to better risk assessment expertise. Moreover, trust in management AI systems adds to this relationship speaking of the twofold importance of technological ability and human confidence in the application of AI tools.

### **5. Epilogue**

#### **5.1 Overview of Study**

The aim of this research was to examine how AI-based decision-making influenced managerial performance when approached in light of One belt One Road (OBOR)-led business development. Based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Decision Theory, Bounded Rationality Theory, and the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study hypothesized that the implementation of AI tools would have a noticeable impact on the effectiveness of managerial decision-making via the channel of the AI-based risk evaluation abilities and that such an interaction will be subject to the determined level of the managerial trust in the AI systems. The empirical analysis results proved that adoption of AI is positively impacting the effectiveness of managers involved in the management of OBOR markets in terms of decision making. To be more specific, AI systems can also bring about improved strategic decisions due to the ability to conduct a more effective risk assessment, which is a paramount necessity in the politically and economically diverse settings characteristic of the OBOR destinations. Another finding made during the study was a positive moderating effect provided by trust in AI tools, which implies that the impact of the AI adoption process is compounded whenever the managers believe in the results of the technology.

#### **5.2 Contribution in Theory**

There are a few theoretical implications of this research. To begin with, it applies the Technology Acceptance Model [3] to the international business employing the case that perceived usefulness of AI technologies in a complex business climate, such as the one in the OBOR regions, has a positive effect on the outcome of managerial decisions. Second, the research confirms the use of the Decision Theory [5] demonstrating that AI systems allow managers to optimize the decision-making process by eliminating informational ambiguity and estimating risks probabilities in a better way. Third, embracing the Bounded Rationality Theory [13], the research shows that AI contributes to the reduction of cognitive limitations in human decision-making because the managers can process more of the related information into their decision-making process. In addition to that, the study builds on the Resource-Based View (RBV) by identifying the so-called AI-driven capabilities as a strategic organizational resource that can lead to a competitive advantage in the context of international expansion. The discoveries help develop a pool of knowledge on the effect of AI on managerial decision-making in business settings that were uncertain and had high stakes attached to them.

#### **5.3 Implications**

To practitioners, one of the things that this study reveals is the need to invest in AI-based decision-support systems to improve the quality of decision making in the OBOR markets. Its application of AI as an international market analysis, competitor intelligence, and risk prospecting tool would be just one of the ways that business leaders should think of, paving the way towards its adoption. Besides,

optimization of managerial trust in use of AI systems should occur with the aid of organizational training, clear AI model design and management tutoring to maximize the value of AI adoption. These insights can also be utilised by policy-makers in the countries involved in the OBOR to come up with the AI governance policies that will promote the responsible and successful implementation of AI systems in cross-border business and issue of data protection, transparency, and accountability of algorithms.

#### 5.4 Research Constraints and Possibilities

This study has limitations regardless of the contributions it provides. This cross-sectional research design limits the possibility of causal interpretation of the dynamic changes of AI adoption and decision-making success. Also, there is the possibility of bias in the piece of work depending on the self-reported data though it had been reduced by instrument validation. This should be the direction of future research where it would be possible to use longitudinal designs and investigate the changes in the adoption and the consequences of AI over time. Moreover, the research comparing several areas along the OBOR corridor may demonstrate a common difference in the effectiveness of AI in accordance with institutional or cultural environment. Lastly, the qualitative study may have deeper results regarding the process of human-AI interaction in the managerial process of decision-making.

#### 5.5 Conclusion

To sum up, in specific, this paper has highlighted the strategic value of AI in decision-making in the management of international business expansion led by the OBOR in the uncertain and complex environments. The research gives a full and clear perspective of what it means to have an AI-driven decision-making ability on how AI-enabled risk evaluations and managerial credibility are used via its empirical confirmation of these two factors in achieving a high-quality strategic performance. With continued efforts to develop the AI technology, its incorporation in the international business shall be of more importance to the firms aiming at a sustainable competitive advantage in the global market.

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